

YOUR GUIDE TO OBSCURE HORROR AND EXPLOITATION ON VIDEOTAPE

# VIDEOOoze™

NUMBER THREE THREE DOLLARS (US)



**WIP Films**

plus • drive-ins revisited • erika blanc  
letters • italian horror movies • and plenty more

**White skin on the black market**



# **WOMEN IN CAGES**

starring

**JENNIFER GAN • JUDY BROWN • ROBERTA COLLINS • PAMELA GRIER**

produced by

**CIRIO SANTIAGO • DAVID OSTERHOUT**

written by

**DAVID OSTERHOUT & JIM WATKINS**

directed by

**JERRY deLEON**

A NEW WORLD PICTURES

RELEASE

Women in Cages was one of the many steamy WIP dramas shot in the Philippines that made the rounds of U.S. drive-ins in the seventies.

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**DEATH BY  
EXAMINATION.**

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In Prison film, analyzing the genre from its  
inception in the 1950s to the present day.

# VIDEOOZE™

NUMBER 3  
WINTER 1991

Your Guide to  
Obscure Horror  
and Exploitation  
on Videotape

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editorial



## The Way of the Dinosaurs

WITH THIS THIRD ISSUE of VIDEOOZE begins our second year of publishing! Looking back, it's quite gratifying to see how the fanzine has matured. Upgrading to offset printing, wider distribution, larger pressruns... and with all this evolving, so will what we cover. With respect to film reviews we'll have a wider variety of opinions as more writers contribute their works. Feature articles are getting more innovative all the time (see Walt O'Hara's *Women in Prison* piece starting on page 21). We might even have some interviews to print by the time #5 rolls around so stay with us!

Back to the Drive-in. Back in VIDEOOZE #1 we reminisced about the drive-ins, an American institution that has in recent years all but gone the way of the dinosaurs. A whole generation has grown-up and never experienced the smell of fresh popcorn permeating their nostrils while waiting on line for a FLAVO™ eggroll and examining the alluring one-sheets (*Werewolves on Wheels* was the one that had my little brain spinning in wonderment) for coming attractions — the ever-present countdown reel blaring in the background to remind them "5 MORE MINUTES!"

Fortunately, these long gone days have not been completely forgotten and some filmmakers in Kentucky are taking their love for the drive-in a step further by documenting the last 15 in their state for broadcast on public television in 1992. *Dusk 'til Dawn: Kentucky's Rural Drive-ins* is probably being edited as most of you read this and promises to be a work of considerable energy and dedication.

George Maranville and Larry Treadway (better known to some as Brother George and Professor Tread, the hosts of a wonderful alternative film forum on Kentucky Educational Television (KET) called *Brains on Film*) received a state grant for their latest project and have been going full tilt ever since. They've been driving all over the state and estimate they will end up shooting an incredible 20,000 minutes of videotaped interviews, local color and of course, the drive-ins themselves (for a 60-90 minute show, that's a helluva lot of post-production work).

If the drive-in program is a success, they hope it can be expanded into a multi-part series for one of the cable networks like the Discovery Channel or Arts & Entertainment. Let's wish them the best of

success. If you want to write in your encouragement, offer assistance, send money, drive-in literature, paraphernalia, or whatever — the address is P.O. Box 1337, Lexington, KY 40590-1337. You can also call the *Brains on Film* Hotline at (606) 259-1031.

Video and Cosmetics. One lazy Sunday afternoon, not too long ago (last summer, actually), I was out for a drive and stumbled across a shop with neon signage bearing the message "Spanish/Chinese Video and Cosmetics (!!!)." Naturally, I had to take a peek inside.

Sure enough, the place was divided into two sections with the videos on the one side and the aforementioned cosmetic-type products on the other. I only had time to peruse the stacks in the Spanish section but was ecstatic to find such titles as *Mision Suicida* (Lorena Velazquez and El Santo!), *Santo y Blue Demon contra El Dr. Frankenstein*, *Noche de Muerte* (Blue Demon versus himself!), *La Orgia de los Muertos* (a longer running version of *The Hanging Woman* with Paul Naschy), *La Llamada del Sexo* (a bizarre Spanish/Italian co-production with George Hilton) and even a copy of de Ossorio's *El Buque*



Euro-veteran John Saxon (real name: Ricky D'Orrico) and Leticia Roman keep 'em guessing in Mario Bava's (and the genre's) first giallo, *The Evil Eye*.

*Maldito* [aka *Horror of the Zombies*]. This place is a goldmine, thought I! The name Candy Coster jumped out at me from one box and on closer examination I found it to be Jess Franco's *Botas Negras Latigo de Cuero*! Once I convinced the owner that I was aware these were foreign language tapes and still wanted a membership anyway, I was on my way out the door with an armload!

Who says the only way to find these kinds of films is through the mail? Discoveries like this at your own backdoor make occasional trips to lesser-travelled parts of town a

must! I've found several other small clubs [none of which were listed in the yellow pages] in the same area since [places with signs in the window reading "Checks Cashed" seem to yield the best results]. Anyone out there who lives near a metropolitan city with a large ethnic population have a similar story to share?

**Classified Ads for Video Traders.** Got a film in mind that you've been dying to see [I've got a list of about 100 myself] but can't seem to find anywhere? Why not run a classified ad in the pages of our next issue? Interested parties should send a self-

addressed, self-stamped envelope for complete details to VIDEOOZE, Video Classifieds, P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304.

**Advertise!** Our readers are the world's biggest enthusiasts of horror and exploitation films! Merchants and dealers should write for our ad rate card!

**Expectant Parents.** By the time the next issue comes out, Kay and I will have joined the ranks of parenthood. Yep! Our first child is due in late March. What kind of an effect this will have on the magazine, I can't say, but I assure you that I have no intention of ceasing publication.

**Missing Articles.** To those of you who were expecting to see that article for the famous "Orgy of the Living Dead" triple bill, I apologize for its conspicuous absence from this issue but expect it will appear in a future edition of VIDEOOZE.

**Mystery Photo.** And finally, for those tortured souls out there who have been banging their heads to identify that woman with John Saxon in the photo on our last back cover — she's Leticia Roman. The film is the late, great Mario Bava's *The Evil Eye* [reviewed by Conrad Widener in this issue]. Talk at you in six months! ■



YOUR GERRY DE LEON article is one of the most interesting and well-researched articles I've read in a long time. Reviews and such are always fun to read, but this article qualifies as reference material. Really superior and a fine piece of work.

I was equally delighted with your review of *The Blood Spattered Bride*. This film had a powerful impact on me at an age when I couldn't even fully understand its implications (15 or 16, at the Ridge Pike Drive-in in Conshohocken). It's always been a favorite of mine, so thanks for doing it justice with your perceptive review. By the way, I checked the export pressbook from Aranda's own Morgana Films, which states that it was shot in English and gives a running time of 100 minutes. The film's Uniespaña pressbook reads 94 min., but that is most likely either a misprint (not uncommon to these documents) or the R.T. of the Spanish domestic version. Unfortunately the Spanish theatrical pressbook, which contains the most detailed credits of the three, neglects to mention the R.T., so it's impossible to know for sure. But it's safe to say it is significantly longer than the 82 minute U.S. video version!

My only complaints are minor. The mag still

seems a bit too lean. Both the letters section and the fanzine reviews could each lose a page in favor of more substantial material. I'd like to see you switch to a smaller typeface and maybe use the extra space for more graphics. And please try to be more careful with foreign titles ("Sangriamente"! (Oops! Better make that "Sangrienta" —Ed.) because these errors will undoubtedly be copied by others. . . better to do 'em right in the first place. Lastly, this business of timing films to the second is really quite silly, and meaningless when discussing films that have been converted from a foreign standard.

**Michael Secula**  
**Bethlehem, PA**

YOU SEEM TO APPRECIATE very well the problems of British genre fans. Still, despite our problems, I think that we too have a good time searching out and finding rare videos (car boot sales and Sunday markets are particularly good sources, and then of course there's the continent. . .).

Another source for rare movies is Satellite TV — I was about to tune into a British satellite TV film channel last night (to tape *Crackhouse*) when I decided to take a trip around the

other channels. There, staring me in the face on a German channel were the words *Murder Rock*. After a brief moment of shock I flicked the selector on the video and taped this instead. It's in German, of course, but then that doesn't matter when you want to see something that bad.

**Alun Fairburn**  
**Wales, U.K.**

He's describing the same feeling I get when I tune in to *UNIVISION* and find myself face-to-face with a late-sixties Santo movie! Alun runs a mail order business dealing in film and TV merchandise. It's especially helpful to fans in the U.K. who are looking for U.S. fanzines but don't want to hassle with obtaining and sending away U.S. currency. Write to 69 Pontamman Road, Ammanford, Dyfed, Wales, SA18 2HX U.K. —Ed.

POOR OL DAVE. HE'S finally catching on that we "foreign cult" zines truly do want to take over fandom and rid it of all U.S. movie coverage (especially if they played at a drive-in in Detroit). Where does he get off complaining about the "dangers" of covering what the editor feels like covering? He complains

that *Dead Calm* and *The Navigator* aren't covered in foreign cult zines? Well, read all about them in *PREMIERE*, *FILM COMMENT*, *AMERICAN FILM*, ad nauseum. Fanzines (at least the ones "I" am interested in) try to cover films not covered by the "mundane" press. I would much rather know what the film's original title is than what they called it at a Detroit "Grindhouse."

**Craig Ledbetter**  
**Kingwood, TX**

I received more than one letter responding directly to Dave Szurek's letter published in *VIDEOOZE* #2. Craig's was the best rebuttal and representative of most others. —Ed.

NICE MINI-PROFILE ON Alexandra Bastedo. She is also in the made-for-cable western *Draw* (1984) with Kirk Douglas and James Coburn.

The incredibly large bosomed babe mentioned in Nathan Miner's review of *La Furia de los Karatecas* is Grace Renat (not sure if that's her real name). *La Furia* is directed by Alfredo B. Crevenna, a fellow who has been directing Mexican exploitation since at least the 1960s (and probably before that). Grace Renat is also in

Crevenna's entertainingly sleazy *The Dolls of King Kong* (at least, I think that's the translation). Anyway, Grace is one beautiful and healthy woman.

**Conrad Widener  
S. Connellsville, PA**

A Spanish language version of the film *Conrad* is talking about is on tape as *Las Muñecas de King Kong*. The Russ Meyeresque Ms. Renat also appeared in *Rene Cardona's Las Computadoras*, a raunchy sex-comedy. —Ed.

YOU MAY THINK I'M NIT-picking, but I found a minor error in Nathan Miner's review of *La Furia de los Karatecas* (1981). In it, Nathan said an *aka* for the film was *El Puño de la Muerte*. This is not so. *La Furia de los Karatecas* (this roughly translates as *Rage/Fury of the Karate Killers*) is a separate film from *El Puño de la Muerte* (which translates to *The Fist/Punch of Death*). Both productions were apparently filmed simultaneously, partly on location at Florida's Coral Castle (which also served as background ambience in films like *The Wild Women of Wango* [1958] and *Nude on the Moon* [1960]). The finished results are very similar, utilizing much of the same cast/crew, but I can assure you they're two different films as I've seen both, but, I admit it is VERY difficult to tell them apart!

*Furia/Puño* were products of the waning years of Mex-wrestling cinema. I suppose the producers believed that if they injected an equal dose of

karate/kung-fu (personified by martial artist/wrestler "Tinieblas"/"Darkness") into El Santo's last two films, they might somehow boost flagging box office. Action flicks of the type had been on the decline since the late 1970s, when the Mexican government censors decided to crack down on filmic violence. A bit of trivia: three years or so after completing *Furia* and *Puño*, El Santo (Rodolfo Guzman Huerta) was dead, and the tradition was carried on — rather pathetically — by his son, who became known as "El Hijo de Santo"/"The Son of Santo," appropriately enough. He made a couple of early-'80s (1983) would-be wrestler/superhero films, but these are among the very WORST ever produced in Mexico.

**Steve Fentone  
Ontario, Canada**

In all fairness to Nathan, it was I who introduced the error into his review of *La Furia de los Karatecas*. That'll teach me to make assumptions! Thanks for setting the record straight Steve! —Ed.

THE NEW CONSERVatism and growing censorship movement in this country frightens me more and more each day, and the recent changes in the high court have chilling, far-reaching implications on the legislative future of OUR country. If things work in his favor, Bush could easily have the court stacked by the time he finishes his second term (speaking of the word "chilling"). With music censorship reaching more

and more ridiculous heights with each passing day, I wonder how long it will be before films are at equally sublime levels. Despite what some others may think, I still have some hope. (So do I Dan, so do I! If time works in cycles then, cinematic freedom-wise, we're about due for another decade like the seventies! —Ed.)

As for Blockbuster, one wonders how long it will be before they're financially "unwell". They are the perfect example of American-overextension, and I find it hard to believe that they will hold on for too much longer. True believers in "the only bad publicity is no publicity," I certainly hope that BBV soon finds their doors closed. In fact, there are those in the video industry who whisper that the whole thing has been planned for failure from the start. . . an interesting concept to consider. As for this renter/writer, I can't honestly remember the last time I rented there.

**Dan Taylor  
Haddonfield, NJ**

Charles Kilgore of ECCO wrote to inform me that he has heard of a group in the Bay area on the West Coast that had organized a boycott of Blockbuster so Dan's prophecy may yet come true! —Ed.

VERY NICE JOB ON VIDEOOZE #2. Fine writing all around, and I would have enjoyed it even more except for the fact that I haven't seen ANY of the films covered! Guess I've just been sheltered or something. The ad for

*Satan's Slave* did bring back memories of being advertised as part of a triple bill back in the late '70s, when such combinations were wonderfully frequent (not that I was old enough to see them). One of the other films on that bill was *Welcome Home Brother Charles*, the "killer dick" movie now out on video as *Soul Vengeance*.

One thing I can comment on is your editorial, with which I disagree on a couple of points. Re: NC-17, I blame not the MPAA, but cowardly distributors, theaters and video stores who won't carry product with this rating, or allow it to be released this way. As far as Blockbuster goes, I did a short piece on them for GOREZONE and found that they have rarely, if ever, been responsible for cutting films. In fact, just about every Blockbuster store I've visited has had numerous unrated horror films for rent, including foreign fare like *The Church*. I blame most of the current problems, ironically enough, on the video industry itself, which has turned the horror genre into a brand-name marketplace, destroyed the viability of independent theatrical releases and allowed youngsters much freer access to these movies, thus fanning the flames of groups seeking to "protect" children from them.

**Michael Gingold  
New York, NY**

VIDEOOZE welcomes letters to the editor, especially substantial ones. Send them to Bob Sargent, P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304.



WELCOME TO OUR FORUM ON ITALIAN CINEMA! I've been looking forward to this for a long time because I hold a special place in my heart for the fantastic films of Italy. Inviting a number of writers to help out, besides being logical, seems to have paid off because you'll find a wide variety of interesting viewpoints are imparted on the following pages. I found all of their reviews to be educational in the extreme for me and I hope you do too. First up is a fine example of the *giallo* (pronounced "jial-lo" according to Max Della Mora, former editor of the Milan-based zine, *GOREZZILLA*) — that singularly Italian blend of mystery and murder — a trend initiated in the early sixties by Mario Bava (might as well start at the beginning, right?).

**THE EVIL EYE (1962)**  
*aka La Ragazza Che Sapeva Troppo*  
**Sinister Cinema**

MARIO BAVA DIRECTED HIS LAST BLACK AND white film with this, the first Italian "giallo." Released by American International in 1964, *The Evil Eye* is the most lighthearted of all his thrillers. The light tone may be largely due to the fact that AIP tampered with the film (for details, check out Tim Lucas' article in *VIDEO WATCHDOG* #5). I guess the distributors of Bava's films (particularly American International) forgot that horror films are supposed to scare you because in their attempt to tone down his films, they did their best to ruin them. It's a credit to Bava's skill as a filmmaker that, even in their compromised versions, these movies can still stand up to the test of time and repeated viewings. *The Evil Eye* should be seen by all Bava devotees.

Lovely Nora Drowson's trip to Rome is anything but a vacation. No sooner is she off the plane than the man she met during the flight is frisked and whisked away by the police (one of them is Franco Russel, also seen in Bava's powerfully erotic and perverse *Blood and Black Lace*). Arriving at her Aunt Ethel's apartment, Nora (Leticia Roman) meets Dr. Marcello Bassi (John Saxon). Dr. Bassi informs Nora her aunt is very ill. Later that night, Nora is startled by a noise. Rushing into her aunt's room, Nora discovers the woman is dead. Understandably upset, she runs outside only to be attacked by a purse-snatcher who knocks her out. Bleary-eyed and barely conscious, Nora then views a woman stumbling out of the darkness with

a knife in her back. A man appears and pulls the knife out of the now-dead woman. Nora blacks-out. A second mysterious man appears to offer our lass help but flees when he hears an approaching policeman.

Awakening in a hospital, Nora informs the police of her wild night, but they find no trace of the murdered woman. They convince her that she must have imagined the whole thing due to her interest in murder mystery novels. Marcello, who is smitten with Nora, blames it on the blow to her head. While dining with a doctor friend of Marcello's, Nora is told that the bonk to the head could have caused her to flashback to a murder which occurred at that same place ten years earlier.

At her aunt's funeral, Nora is introduced to Laura Craven-Torroni (Valentina Cortese) who invites Nora to stay with her and her husband. Laura was a good friend of Nora's Aunt Ethel. While staying with Laura, Nora learns about the series of killings which terrorized Rome ten years earlier known as "The Alphabet Murders." The last victim was Laura Craven's sister. Nora, who is just a tad on the paranoid side, begins to fear for her life since her last name starts with the letter "D."

Poor Nora isn't even sure she can trust Dr. Bassi. Every man who looks at her appears ominous. One such fellow is Andre Landini (Dante Di Paolo, also in *Blood and Black Lace*). Landini was the man who attempted to help Nora that fateful night. He tells Nora and Marcello that he covered the alphabet murders as a reporter. Landini aided the police in capturing a suspect who was later convicted in the killings, but Landini always had doubts about his guilt. Soon after, Landini is found dead by Nora.

Returning home, Nora is shocked to find Laura's husband near death with a knife in his back. Suddenly, a wild-eyed Laura appears. She is the alphabet killer! Laura is just about to do in Nora when the not-quite-dead Mr. Torroni shoots his wife through the door.

Finally able to relax, Nora and Marcello ride up the mountainside in a cable car. Dr. Bassi has just finished telling Nora to forget about murder when a woman and her lover (riding in another cable car) are shot dead by the woman's husband. Calmly, Nora insists to Marcello that they didn't see anything and the duo continue up the mountain ignoring the killings.

I don't watch a Mario Bava film expecting great character development or even a story in which every detail must make sense. I watch his films to be entertained and





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# THE EVIL EYE

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to see a master director do his thing. The script, by Bava, Franco Prosperi, Sergio Corbucci, Mino Guerrini, Ennio De Concini and Eliana De Sabata contains some interesting quirks. The fact that Leticia Roman's character is paranoid is interesting. This affects her efforts to unmask the killer (Mrs. Marple she isn't). Roman is very appealing in this role. And while John Saxon stands-in as the hero, he does nothing heroic. In the end, it is Laura's near dead husband who saves Nora. These are flawed individuals who are not superhuman private detectives. Weak heroes or no heroes at all are common in Bava's films. His exceptional camerawork and deft use of lighting give life to even the most routine of scenes: Nora's discovery of her Aunt Ethel is a standout shock.

Robert Nicolosi's original score has been replaced by one from Les Baxter. I haven't heard the Nicolosi score, but it's probably better than the goofy Baxter soundtrack. Note that the picture of Nora's dead uncle is none other than the director himself, helping to make *The Evil Eye* a fun entry in the long and distinguished career of Mario Bava.

—Conrad Widener

*The familiar writings of Euro-specialist Conrad Widener have been seen everywhere of late from the pages of EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA to MONSTER. Expect to see more of his work published in future issues of VIDEOOZE.*

**GENTLY BEFORE SHE DIES (1972)**  
**aka Il Tuo Vizio E Una Stanza Chiusa E Solo**  
**Io Ne Ho La Chiave**  
**(No U.S. video release)**

NOVELIST OLIVERO RUVINE (LUIGI PISTILLI) IS A misogynistic mean-spirited SOB who delights in verbally and physically abusing his wife Irana (Anita Strindberg). As the film opens, Olivero is holding court before a ragtag group of hippies (members of the Worldwide Campgrounds) spewing out invectives at the world. As soon as the group leaves, he attacks his wife ("Crummy slut-stinking whore") much to the delight of his cat Satan. Over the course of the next 90+ minutes, we'll see Sergio Martino (and scriptwriters Ernesto Gastaldi, Adriano Bolzoni and Sauro Scavolini) produce one of the better filmic adaptations of Edgar Allen Poe's *THE BLACK CAT*.

As this is a Sergio Martino thriller, a stylish murder sequence is just around the corner. One of Olivero's love affairs (Daniela Giordano, who was the lead in *The Girl in Room 2A*) is set-up and slashed to death with a sickle-type blade. This sequence is totally gratuitous because we later find out that there is a sex-murderer skulking about so as to throw suspicion onto the Pistilli character. Following quickly on the heels of that murder, both Olivero and Irana discover their black maid Brenda,

slashed to death at their estate (which, reflecting the mental and physical state of its owners, is in complete disarray and decay). They decide to bury her inside the walls of their wine cellar, but don't seem particularly worried that a killer may be loose in their house. Into this sordid situation comes Floriana (a short-haired Edwige Fenech), Olivero's niece, who decides to visit for awhile as a "dumb-ass, ball-breaking relative." She soon witnesses Irana's abuse at the hands of her husband and decides to help solve Irana's dilemma. However, Floriana is not all she appears to be. One minute she's involved in a lesbian grope session with Irana (tastefully filmed without the usual dollops of exploitative nudity), the next, she's balling Olivero's eyes out.

All this time Irana is continually beaten and raped by Olivero and even the cat Satan (which belonged to Olivero's mother) gets in on the act, either clawing her in the middle of the night or killing-off her pet pigeons. When Irana hears Olivero tell Floriana how he intends to kill off his wife, she snaps and murders him with a pair of scissors. Irana bribes Floriana with the family jewels into helping her wall-up Olivero's body next to Brenda's down in the cellar. At this point, if you're at all familiar with the Poe story, you know who else is inside that wall. However, there are still plenty of surprises in store for those who are able to track this film down (for example, Ivan Rassimov only appears near the end but his presence is a very important one.).

Sergio Martino is without-a-doubt the best Italian craftsman working the *Giallo*/thriller Ghetto. Other fine examples of his work include *Lo Strano Vizio della Signora Wardh* (*Blade of the Ripper*) 1971, *La Coda dello Scorpione* 1971, *Tutti I Colori del Buio* (*Day of the Maniac*) 1972 and *I Corpi Presentano Tracce di Violenza Carnale* (*Taxo*) 1973. All are uniformly well-made and immensely entertaining (mention should also be made of scriptwriter Ernesto Gastaldi who contributed his skills to all of them). Bruno Nicolai's score consists of three main themes that convey the past (a harpsichord melody used to invoke Pistilli's incestuous memories of his dead mother, the killer stalking his prey to a hard-driving theme utilizing a piano and guitar, and lush strings accompanied by a hauntingly beautiful female voice for the many romantic interludes). Nicolai also scored the other Martino thrillers (except for *Taxo* which featured music by the DeAngeles brothers) with this being his last effort for Martino. All are top-of-the-line and highly sought-after by soundtrack collectors. Giancarlo Ferrando has worked as cinematographer on more Martino films than anyone else (this film being his first solo credit for the director) and he's put top good use here. 75% of the film takes place inside the dilapidated mansion and Ferrando emphasizes the decay by his choice of colors used throughout the predominantly nighttime filming. There's a scene in a prostitute's bedroom, surrounded by creepy-looking dolls as she's attacked by the sex-killer, that Ferrando heightens by his emphasis on bizarre camera angles.

The acting by the four principals also helps to elevate

Previous page: American International ad mat for the 1984 U.S. release of Mario Bava's *The Evil Eye*.

the proceedings. Luigi Pistilli has never been slier (though he had a similar role in Romano Scavolini's *Un Bianco Vestito per Mariale* [1972], he is twice as despicable here [so you can't wait for his demise]. Ivan Rassimov has a minimum of screen time [and boy, is he saddled with a pitiful gray wig!] but doesn't disappoint. Anita Strindberg as the thoroughly abused Irana convinces you that when she snaps, she's quite capable of committing murder. Without giving away any surprises, her character turns out to be the least predictable. And then there's Edwige Fenech. Obviously beautiful, with a wonderful figure, here she plays completely against type [beware of the review in Phil Hardy's *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORROR FILMS*. Whoever penned it got the characters of Fenech and Strindberg ass-BACKWARDS!]. Usually she's the innocent victim whom no one believes when she attempts to convince them that someone's out to get her (as in *Day of the Maniac*), however here, she's a gold-digging free spirit whose primary concern is for herself. The way she casually shifts from Strindberg's bed to Pistilli's and plays both characters against one another is a delight to watch. What she doesn't suspect is that the joke's on her and she isn't nearly as clever as she thought she was. Since all the main actors are speaking English, the dubbing is non-intrusive.

Finally, if you think you've heard the title of this film before (that is, the English translation of the Italian title, *Your Vice Is Like a Closed Room and Only I Have the Key*), you have. In Martino's *Blade of the Ripper* [aka *Next!*] there's a scene where the Fenech character receives flowers from a threatening Ivan Rassimov. On the card that came with the flowers he has written, "... But Your Vice Is Like a Room Locked From the Inside and Only I Have the Key."

—Craig Ledbetter

*Craig Ledbetter needs no introduction to fans of European fare. With this review, the editor of EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA graces our pages for the first time.*

# **THE OTHER HELL (1981)** **aka Il Altro Inferno** **Vestron/Lettuce Entertain You**

ALTHOUGH RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TWO WORST of the Romero-influenced zombie rip-offs, *Night of the Zombies* and *Zombi 3*, as well as other opprobrium such as the post-nuclear epic *Rats* and various Nazi atrocity pictures, Bruno Mattei (who often directs under the pseudonym Vincent Dawn and is presented here as Stefan Oblowsky) manages with this film to fashion an interesting dissertation on the insanity sexual repression and religious tyranny breed.

The title of the film presumably alludes to the fact that although there has never been any evidence of anyone having suffered in "Hell," plenty have been tormented in this realm with the dread of eternal chthonic damnation. The opening sequence quite grotesquely demonstrates

the dementia of a cloistered life. In the catacombs beneath a nunnery, one particularly feral sister is going through the procedure of embalming another who had died after having an abortion. Excising first the woman's vagina, she utters, "The Devil enters a woman there and devours her. The genitals are the door to evil. . . the labyrinth that leads to Hell." Then, momentarily overcome by the influence of an ominous statue with demoniacally radiant red eyes, she stabs her assistant to death.

Later, during a priest's exorcism of the convent, another nun endures paroxysms and stigmata before finally dying. An ensuing investigation is conducted by a skeptical priest, Carlo de Mejo (also in Fulci's *The Gates of Hell*), who believes the convent's problem is not Satanic but psychic. Upon his arrival, he meets Boris the groundskeeper (played by Franco Garofolo, the Satanic minister in *Naked Exorcism*), who it appears is responsible for any and all pregnancies amongst the sisters. During his probe, de Mejo gets to see firsthand the sisters' gleeful embalming process, and he makes entries in his tape-recorded journal of how he believes the nuns mistrust him. He is assaulted in his confessional by one and later attacked by another who tries to garrote him with a rosary. All the while he is being followed by a mysterious nun, face concealed by a white cloth, who is at one point seen telepathically impelling Garofolo's dogs to kill the groundskeeper.

The whole mystery is explained to de Mejo in a ridiculous, letterboxed "flashback," which relates how years before, the current mother superior, Franca Stoppi (who had been Iris in Joe D'Amato's *Buried Alive* [the two films also share the same musical score by Goblin]), had given birth, and the then-abbess had thrown the baby girl in a pot of boiling liquid in the kitchen. The gifted child survived and used psychical powers to force the head nun to strangle herself. De Mejo is visited by Stoppi, who somehow realizes the priest has figured the whole thing out and, feeling that he will try to take away her daughter, now grown-up, sticks a knife in him, twisting it as she observes an analogy between the stabbing and sexual intercourse. She has also been duped by the subjugation of her Catholicism and believes that she fornicated with Satan to produce the girl (although all evidence points to Garofolo). The daughter materializes to save de Mejo, revealing her scarred face (which merely looks as though she had participated in a shoofty pie-eating contest). Obviously borrowing from *Carrie*, she is stabbed by her mother, after which she chases Stoppi into the catacombs. There, in a scene superior to any of a similar nature in either of Mattei's zombie pictures, she vivifies embalmed nuns as well as the corpse of Garofolo to attack her mother. The groundskeeper snaps the mother superior's neck in his hands.

The epilogue feebly and unnecessarily tries to explain what has gone before. Visiting the same sinister morgue, another priest and the new abbess discover a treatise on black magic, which makes him postulate that this convent was run by a coven of witches. When the priest announces that there will be another exorcism, the statue

from the first scene reappears, eyes glowing, and the nun-nery experiences a tremor. In a terrible splice job, the last ten seconds of the film, horrendously grainy and with THE END over it, features the priest saying, "There's a logical explanation for everything" and a dead nun bursting out of her upright coffin, ostensibly an attempt to give the movie a typically 80's "shock" ending.

There have been sundry other horror films set in a convent, the best of which are probably *Alucarda*, *Flavia the Heretic* and *The Devils*, and a common theme amongst all of them is of religious oppression by men. *The Other Hell*, which compares favorably to those pictures but is still a notch below them, does not establish any male figure as evil. In fact, de Mejo is akin to the only sympathetic male characters in *Alucarda* and *La Monache de Sant'Archangelo*. The film is also filled with enough heretical imagery to make any Roman Catholic indignant: a wormy head in a tabernacle, a possessed nun spitting-up blood after partaking of the Eucharist, and a squawking bat perched atop a full-size crucifix. Were Mattei an allegorical director, the last image could be interpreted as a metaphor for the vampiric nature of Christianity.

*The Other Hell* is not Mattei's only horror film set in a nunnery. Check out issue number three of the revamped EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA for a review of *La Vera Storia della Monaca di Monza*.

—Lorne Marshall

The talented Lorne Marshall is a regular contributor to VIDEOOZZ whom I had the pleasure of meeting in person at Fanex 5 this past August.

### THE NEW YORK RIPPER (1982) aka *Lo Squartatore di New York* Vidmark

"SOMEONE IS TAKING A BITE OUT OF THE BIG Apple!" declared the ads for Vidmark's U.S. release, almost jokingly, for Fulci's widely condemned slice 'n' dice giallo.

Fulci's career has spanned some thirty-plus years, during which time he has covered a broad spectrum of subjects, from comedies to westerns, Rock n' Roll films to his well established visceral excesses of the early eighties. During that time he has displayed a wealth of visual talent and an unnerving knack for unsettling the viewer. At the same time however, Fulci has also shown a disregard for intelligent storylines and never seems to be able to pace his films adequately. The visual aspects have always been at the forefront of his films. For instance, who could, or would, want to forget the excruciating "eyeball piercing scene" from *Zombie* (1979), or the unfortunate entrap-spewing victim (Daniela Doria) of the suicidal Father Thomas in the Lovecraftian *The Gates of Hell* (1980), or the vision of Hell created by a satanical warlock-cum-painter in the exceptional *The Beyond* [1981]?

It is for images like these that we truly appreciate

Lucio Fulci and what he has tried to do. However, there is another side to the man. Fulci has been labelled a "hack" and has been criticized heavily for not showing enough originality in his works. *The New York Ripper* is different to his other works: the visual flair is sadly absent, the possible "imagination explosion" that is simmering below the surface never breaks and we are left with the bare bones of a film that could have been. So unlike Argento, Bava Sr. and Co., Fulci presents an unstructured and superficial story in which his misogynistic conviction are vented upon female characters in the film. Also present, but somewhat "lost" amongst the extreme violence and hysteria are Fulci's subversive messages. Fulci's damning of the Church and of Catholicism (despite being a Catholic) has been long founded and well documented, quote: "I have realized that our God is a God of suffering. . . ." Fulci has no fear of hell since, "Hell is already in us. . ."

The story was originally intended to be based on the "Boston Strangler" murders but was then switched to New York. The opening credit sequence immediately indicates how the rest of the film will transpire. The sight of a dog clutching a severed hand in its mouth in still frame whilst Francesco de Masi's dramatic theme blares out of the titles will no doubt gear the viewer up for the next ninety or so minutes of questionable pleasure.

Detective Williams (Jack Hedley) has the unenviable job of solving the Brooklyn Bridge murder. This is made all the more difficult when a second murder occurs. A young female cyclist (Cinzia de Ponti — a former Miss Italy) collides with an irate motorist's VW Bug, whilst attempting to board a ferry to the legendary Staten Island. This is where Fulci attempts to lay his first unconvincing red herring. I say attempt, because that is what it is, a bad attempt. It is painfully obvious that the VW owner is not going to be the killer as he never appears again. The cyclist exchanges a few heated words with the VW owner — he exclaims she has the brains of a chicken whilst he is dismissed as an asshole! Later aboard the ferry, the cyclist writes the word SHIT on the windscreen of the VW in red lipstick, it is then that the mysterious killer appears, his appearance is restricted only to a ridiculous Donald Duck imitated speech. We are presented with a view of Ms. de Ponti and her very appealing legs before the killer strikes. The murder, unsurprisingly, is filmed with an unflinching camera and proceeds to show the stabbings in graphic detail. The effects are crude (some of Gino de Rossi's worst work) but nevertheless are effective, the knife tears the flesh and the blood gushes freely. It may appear to someone who hasn't experienced any of Fulci's previous work that the murder wouldn't be detailed as the camera does cut away to an exterior shot, but it soon returns with a vengeance.

Williams is convinced that the two murders are connected. Williams' superior (cameoed by Fulci himself) is concerned that Williams' theory may be leaked to the press and the city of New York could be gripped with a major panic. Williams seeks the help of a psychologist



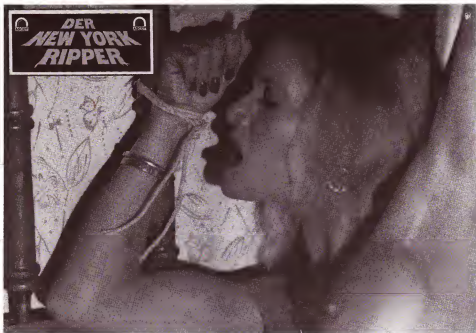
Renato Rossini and Alexandra Delli Colli in an intimate moment from Lucio Fulci's pathological *The New York Ripper*.

[Paulo Malco], but with New York being the size that it is, there are a lot of suspects. The main core of activity centers around a 42nd St. gigolo (Renato Rossini) who has two of his fingers missing from his right hand, and the nymphomaniac wife (Alexandra Delli Colli) of a sexually frustrated business man. Delli Colli's character is interesting but is underdeveloped (in a manner of speaking!). Amusingly, she wears a brown raincoat and visits a live sex show which she tapes on her Walkman for the pleasure of her husband. It is at the sex show that we are also introduced to Rossini. He is an immediate suspect due to his menacing looks and, however odd it may seem, his deformed hand. After the sex show has ended, the female stripper (Zora Kerova) is murdered backstage. The lights fail and the killer's arm appears from behind some curtains to repeatedly stab the starlet in the groin with the shards of glass from a broken bottle. This scene is also done with particular crudeness but the use of light is impressive and stylish. The green and red lights cast an eerie glow over Kerova's dead body.

As Delli Colli's character epitomizes all that the killer despises, she becomes the focal point of the killer's hatred. After seeking sexual thrills in a Hispanic bar (if being toed by someone's sweaty feet is pleasure), Delli

Colli pays the creepy gigolo for his sexual services. Kinky sex is the order of the day and Delli Colli is tied to the bedposts in a hotel room. The gigolo goes to make an anonymous phone call. A radio broadcaster warns the three-fingered guy to "Leave the ladies alone!". Delli Colli hears the transmission and unties herself. She attempts to escape from the hotel but is confronted by the killer in a corridor where she is promptly slit right down the middle. This killing is less detailed than the others but forms an integral part of the plot. The suspicion is completely diverted to the gigolo, long time fans of the *giallo* will no doubt be a little more astute than Fulci would give them credit for, and will realize that Rossini is just another misleading clue. It is not hard to impugn his motives for murder.

Fulci introduces a subplot which concerns a brilliant young physicist (Andrea Occhipinti), his pretty wife (Almanta Keller) and their little daughter who lies terminally ill in hospital. Whilst travelling on the underground train, Keller's attention is drawn to the intimidating presence of Rossini. Keller leaves the underground in a hurry, we assume being followed by Rossini. It is here that the killer attempts to strike again — he attacks Keller but is unsuccessful and she escapes. Williams and



Relatedly deciding she'd better get the hell outta Dodge, Alexandra Delli Coll is about to meet *The New York Ripper*.

Dr. Davis muse over the killer's actions, suggesting that the killer could well be Rossini. However, he also harbors a suspicion over Occhipinti's involvement. His suspicions are all the more founded when Keller is admitted to hospital after being attacked and Rossini himself is later found dead.

Lt. Williams receives a telephone call from the duck-voiced killer who proudly announces that his next victim, a hooker (Daniela Doria) with whom Williams shares a "working relationship" is about to become chop suey. We now reach the part of the film that earned the film its well-deserved notoriety. The killer takes a razor to the bound Doria and, in agonizing close-up, the blade slices through the peach-like flesh of the girl's stomach, her nipple is sliced in half and her assailant finally drags the blade slowly over the girl's moving eyeball. Such sadism is very hard to defend, but as in Fulci's earlier, and indeed later works, the visceral elements take center stage. They become almost a trademark, one that Fulci sheds no remorse over. At the same time, the lack of equanimity he shows is also quite apparent.

The final conclusion arrives as Dr. Davis (who is revealed to be a closet homosexual) leads Lt. Williams to Occhipinti's house. Keller is discharged from hospital.

She has flashbacks of her attack and nightmares where hands burst out from a cinema seat to grab her. Occhipinti is acting very strange and Keller discovers a kitchen knife where the tip had been blunted. Her attacker struck a wall instead of her, the truth dawns on her and she stabs her husband before he has a chance to kill her. Fulci throws in one last "shock" as, predictably, Occhipinti rises up and attacks Keller while screaming vehemently in the duck voice. Lt. Williams and Dr. Davis arrive in the nick-of-time in order to blow Occhipinti's brains out (via the side of his head). The heroes stand, grim-faced, reflecting on a job well done.

There is one recurring theme which prevails throughout this movie, and that is of Fulci's obsession with seeing beauty being destroyed. The victims are attractive females — promiscuous, scantily-clad and incestuous. It is those three factors that give Fulci the cover he needs to avoid the accusations of misogynist being passed his way. This also doesn't leave his integrity open to questioning. Occhipinti's character is a Fulci incarnate. Perhaps a role model for him, an innocuous way of exposing his frustrations and sexual hang-ups. The whole film is of a sexually violent essence and can be compared to Jesus Franco's *The Sadist of Notre Dame* (1979), where Franco himself

took on the role of Vogel, a religiously-tormented man who "punishes" promiscuity with death and sadism. Although the films are different in presentation, the underlying theme is the same. Perhaps Franco and Fulci are not too far apart in their ideas on Catholicism and sex in society.

*The New York Ripper* is technically inferior to a lot of Fulci's other works. The photography is not intelligently thought out. The shots are made for convenience-sake rather than any artistic purposes. The dreaded zoom lens makes an appearance. However tightly constructed the film may be, the gore scenes serve only to lift the tedium.

The film suffers even more from the lack of characterization (a common problem with Fulci films, see also the review of *Un Gatto nel Cervello* this issue—Ed.). Delli Colli's character is tragically neglected. Her pursuit of kinky sexual thrills is well-detailed, but her involvement is minimal and serves only to provide titillation. Fulci hints at Dr. Davis' homosexuality as he buys a hardcore homo mag, the contents of which are briefly shown. It would seem that most of the characters have sexual "problems," Hedley's involvement with a hooker, Delli Colli and her husband's bizarre sex games and Dr. Davis' homosexual tendencies. Why Hedley and Malco's characters are detailed as such is a mystery to me, but it sure adds to the seediness of the whole picture.

Whether or not Fulci's films are made to be taken seriously is open to debate, but what is apparent is that Fulci's mind is in a state of complete turmoil. The man professes to be a workaholic (this being a primary reason for his much-publicized heart attack) and takes great pride in his work. He delights in detailing his own inner hell to the world, something which I personally cannot identify with. *The New York Ripper*, for me, fails by a big margin. The imaginative ideas and visual excitement found in his zombie films, for example, is sadly absent. The film remains a lucid fairytale that borders on the lugubrious aspects of human nature, but is unstimulating and unfounded in its motives. Gore alone does not make a good film. If ever there was any danger of that being true, then *The New York Ripper* simply couldn't fail. In the cold light of day however, it remains as disposable and as two-dimensional as the characters that are portrayed in it.

It is interesting to note that Fulci has not come up with anything of real worth since. Perhaps a sign of things to come? I certainly hope not!

—Nigel Bartlett

Formerly a fanzine editor himself, Nigel Bartlett lives in Great Britain and is a regular contributor to VIDEOOZE.

**MS. STILETTO (1969)  
aka *Isabella, Duchessa Dei Diavoli*  
Force**

THE ITALIAN AND, TO SOME EXTENT, GERMAN filmmakers have always had a knack for taking the latest

film craze and contributing their own "spicier" versions. Titles such as *Warriors of the Wasteland*, *The Sexorcist* and *Alien Contamination* have exploited to maximum potential the groundwork laid by Australia's *The Road Warrior*, and the U.S. releases *The Exorcist* and *Alien*.

If the first batch of popular films were fantastic and interesting, more often than not, the Italian "copies" were even MORE fantastic and outrageous (but not always as entertaining). Of course, the Italian "Spaghetti Westerns" such as *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*, not only successfully adapted the overworked and abused cowboy genre, once so popular here in the states, but actually transcended its influence to produce THE best westerns around.

This Italian/German co-production was based on a series of adult comics (much like *Barbarella* and *Danger: Diabolik*) that appeared in paperback form in the mid-60's under the title "Isabella." Ms. Stiletto presents the viewer with a period piece swashbuckler, given the added twist of a female protagonist.

European actress Brigitte Skay stars as Isabella, who sets out to avenge the slaughter of her royal family and subsequent takeover of the country by the evil Baron von Nutter. Ms. Skay has had quite a prolific career in foreign cinema, exposing her talents to the screen beginning in 1956 with *Il Momento Più Bello* and *Le Cas Du Docteur Laurent*, and continuing on at least through 1979 with the feature *Der Komantische*.

The plotline to follow is basically a boring mish-mash of nudity, sex and swordplay. While watching this film, I was reminded of the many foreign "adults only" rereads that constantly fill the late-night film slots of such cable channels as Showtime and HBO. The action is kept to a minimum while the T&A is played to the "hilt."

Isabella poses as a whore and infiltrates the Baron's castle after he pays handsomely for a night's entertainment. After a nude oil rubdown, Ms. Skay performs a topless dance and unsuccessfully attempts to stab von Nutter with a dagger.

Caught during her escape, Isabella is chained to the dungeon wall and whipped (while topless, of course). Meanwhile, her gypsy lover, Diego, and his partner come to the rescue and secret Isabella away to a small village. Von Nutter manages to later capture Diego and twists the whereabouts of Isabella out of him using the ever-handly torture rack.

Alas, when von Nutter arrives to rid himself of Isabella, he learns that he's been led into a trap. Isabella awaits with sword in hand and manages to disarm him after a less-than-exciting swordfight. At this time, the Baron confesses to the murders and illegal takeover and is hauled away by the authorities to await his execution.

What should have been all, isn't. We find out with the help of a realistic, close-up beheading, that Baron von Nutter somehow escaped and put his brother in his place (a cloth hood had hidden the individual's face during his execution)! Cut to a long shot of the Baron riding away into the sunset.

Director Bruno Corbucci peppers this already thin,

hard-to-swallow plot with inane sequences of nudity and barely average fight sequences. I got the impression that the script was made-up as the film was being shot. Corbucci was apparently influenced to enter the film world by his brother, Sergio Corbucci, who co-directed *La Danza Macabra* along with Antonio Margheriti in 1964, and later distinguished himself as a prolific director of Italian westerns.

—Nathan Miner

*Nathan Miner is the editor of the late, great BITS N PIECES who usually devotes his time to Mex-ploitation efforts for VIDEOOZE that appear in "Santo's Corner" (which will be returning next issue).*

**THE KING OF KONG ISLAND (1968)**  
**aka Eve, La Venere Selvaggia**  
**Video Search of Miami**

FIRST OFF, THERE IS NO "KING" (UNLESS YOU REFER to either the hero of this flick — or the villain). The two or three rubbery-suited simians are hardly in the same league as another "Kong" we all cherish, and — oh yes, since the film is set in the CONTINENT of Africa, it seems unfair to belittle that land mass by referring to it as an ISLAND.

Now that I've dissected the title, you are prepared for this goofy Italian horror-jungle hybrid. The hero, Burt (stocky Brad Harris), is a soldier-of-fortune in Africa (the continent, not the island) who takes part in an ambush on an unarmed band in the wilderness, only to be shot himself by Dr. Albert, one of his cohorts, who kills everyone else. "You-BASTARD!" ("basterdo" on the subtitled widescreen print I viewed. Schlock film viewing CAN be educational.) groans Burt, wounded and left for dead among the corpses.

After the credits (the music sounds like that eerie female vocal from the original *Star Trek* TV series mixed with some of the worst cocktail bar-style keyboard and synth drums mixed in), we cut to a futuristic lab in a cave. As sound effects from a Disney record warble on the soundtrack, Dr. Albert and his evil assistant Turk ("Turkey" in the subtitled print. Subtle commentary? Honesty?) operate on a sedated ape, inserting a transistor into the unconscious rubber mask — er, monkey's head. This is the most graphic gore of the film.

Next thing we know, we are at a hotel where we find that Burt has survived the shooting (what a surprise! It would have been a short film otherwise!) and is out looking for Dr. Albert. He runs into old friend Theodore, a slovenly bully married to Ursula, a sexy brunette who once had a fling with Burt. He also meets Theodore's grown children from a previous marriage: Diana (who also has a crush on Burt), and Robert (who doesn't).

Diana and Robert go off in search of the legendary "sacred monkey" that is to be found in a part of the jungle "forbidden to white men." The evil Turk follows them. As Diana and Robert pass and point at many a

variable quality stock shot, the musak-ish score makes their search into the forbidden zone seem to go on endlessly. At night, when they finally run out of library footage, the native bearers begin to grumble (Is it beans? A formation of unionization of laborers? A cliché?). "What's the trouble, Malumba!" asks Robert. Well, Malumba and the others do not wish to take the white men (and woman) any further.

Unluckily for them, they won't have to. Turk has the mind-controlled apes attack the camp (after Diana does a PG-ish strip in her tent), killing the natives, abducting Diana, and leaving a wounded Robert with a warning to tell his father that there is only one way to get his daughter back — a way we do not hear.

Later, Robert tells Burt and Theodore that the apes acted like robots under Turk's direction. Before setting off, Ursula warns Burt to beware of Theodore and to avoid violating ancient taboos. More stock shots, and we are back at the sight of the wrecked camp. Following Robert and Burt is a mysterious stranger who has been shadowing Burt for half the picture.

Burt and Robert finally see the "sacred monkey" — a near-naked black-haired beauty who we see running in slow motion, her breasts bouncing so delightfully that we almost didn't hear the voiceover explaining that all animals obey her. Is she the ancient taboo that they shouldn't "violate"? We never do find that one out. Robert sneaks off and meets Turk. It seems the deal is to trade Burt for Diana.

That night, the apes attack again, but Burt kills one of them when they attack the mysterious stranger. The grateful fellow identifies himself as Forsen of Interpol. He has been following Burt because of that little ambush that opened the film (remember on the continent, not the island, of Africa). They don't blame Burt (why not? He did take part in the killings), but are using him to track down Dr. Albert. Forsen and Burt discover the bearers and Robert are all dead.

Tribesmen capture the surviving pair, then set them free to hunt them down. Forsen is killed, but Burt escapes. He meets the young wild girl. "Are you the sacred Monkey?" asks Burt, which makes for one hell of an original pick-up line. He calls her Eve, as Sacred Monkey is a tad long to keep referring to her as. He sees she has Diana's bracelet and has her lead him to Albert's cave, where she found the jewelry.

Albert plans to take over the world (what a novel idea!) via his controlled simian servants. Turk and Burt (sounds like a bad comedy team) battle in the cave, ending with Burt strangling his opponent. Eve and Diana are threatened by Albert's zombified apes (which are standing abnormally erect for apes), when suddenly Theodore and Ursula rush in from who knows where, brandishing rifles. Theodore is miffed with Dr. A.'s plans for Diana, as well as killing Robert, especially since Theodore has been helping Dr. A.'s mad scheme. Ursula shoots Theodore. It seems she has been having an affair with the evil doctor. Albert, however, shoots Ursula when she is about to shoot Eve. Seems he has taken a fancy to the jungle



maiden (love is so fickle!).

Burt grabs a rifle and shoots the computer brain of the lab (which, strangely, is shaped like a brain! Ho-ho, these literate mad set designers!). By destroying this silly prop, Burt has released the apes from Dr. Albert's mind control. Eve now calls on them to attack the evil scientist. They chase him through the tunnels, where he falls out of camera range as they pounce upon him. We hear his off-camera scream, I guess to leave open the possibility of a (thankfully) unrealized sequel (*Dr. Albert Rises Again?* Gasp!).

Burt and Diana return to the river where a boat awaits them. Diana lets Eve have her bracelet for luck (Luck? Fat lot of luck it brought Diana!). As Burt and Diana float down the river back to civilization, Eve merrily walks back into the jungle holding the hand of a small chimp (who probably wrote the film). A silly, illogical pile of hokum.

—Kevin Shinnick

*Theatre and film history buff par excellence Kevin Shinnick also writes for the brilliant SCARLET STREET.*

**THE KILLER MUST STRIKE AGAIN (1976)**  
*aka L'Assassino E Costretto Ad Uccidere*  
*Ancora*  
Video Search of Miami

THE NAME LUIGI COZZI INEVITABLY CONJURES visions of a well-meaning but inept Dario Argento-wannabe content with directing lazy, derivative garbage of the worst kind. Let's face it—none of us would shed a tear if the sorry, shabby likes of *Starcrash*, *Alien Contamination*, or *Hercules* (1983) were to suddenly disappear from video store shelves and UHF TV airings.

After an introduction like that, it's hard to believe (to this reviewer at least) that Lewis Coates (his Americanized pseudonym) does possess an extraordinary talent (or did at one time) as *The Killer Must Strike Again* amply demonstrates. Even a cursory viewing of this film will prove for once and for all that Luigi is certainly capable of greatness. Try as one might, his output cannot be so easily dismissed.

The film opens bleakly, promising additional perverseness. We see an incredibly thin (though imposing) man dressed in black (Michel Antoine) carrying the corpse of an obviously dead young woman to a car. He places the limp, lifeless body in the passenger side, gets in himself, and starts the engine. Before he drives away, he takes time out to massage the dead flesh of her right breast—a long, ill caress. He drives into the night.

Next we are introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Mainardi and it seems they're having a lovers' quarrel. The argument concerns money, plain and simple. Mr. Mainardi (played by George Hilton, the dashing star of countless Italian thrillers) was taking way too much cash from the bank account of his rich wife Nora (Teresa Velasquez) and squandering it on wine and women. He threw that in her face, half expecting her to keep indulging his vices for the

sheer need of a manly presence. Sadly, he was mistaken. Nora then threatened to cut him off for good and file for divorce. Puming, Mr. Mainardi (we're never given his first name) storms out of the apartment swearing never to return. While driving around the town, he spies something odd by the city dock, a strange-looking man propping-up the limp (dead?) form of a woman in the driver's seat of a Volkswagen Bug. He buckles her in, slams shut the door, and pushes the car into the water! The killer begins to light a cigarette while watching the car slowly sink into the water, his face betraying no emotion at all... until the bright lights of a parked car suddenly illuminate him. He is frozen in the glare as Mr. Mainardi walks toward him, takes the lighter from the killer's hand and lights the man's cigarette. Mainardi notices that the lighter bears some initials (maybe the killer's?) and pockets it. He knows he's caught the man in the act of a crime but has other plans for him besides turning him in to the authorities.

Mainardi soon contracts the mysterious killer to rid him of his wife, but under one condition: make it look like a kidnapping so our unfaithful husband will not be a suspect. The killer agrees but as soon as the deed is done, things go terribly wrong (and the film's pace picks-up considerably). He strangles Nora with a phone cord, carries her out to his car and places her in the trunk. Quickly, he returns to her now-vacant apartment to cover any traces of his presence. He returns to the spot where he'd left the car only to find it missing... stolen and roaring down the road. Understandably peeved, he breaks into a nearby auto, setting off the theft alarm, and waking-up the neighborhood. He's able to shut the horn off and get the engine started but not before there are people at their windows witnessing his crime. Mr. Mainardi returns late that evening, after whooping it up at a noisy party (alibi), only to find (surprise!) the police at his place and his wife missing.

Two bored teenagers looking for kicks have stolen the killer's car—along with Nora's dead body. They're on a joyride to Seagull Rock, a nearby resort town, where they plan to shack-up for a few days. The killer tracks them in his stolen vehicle. Meanwhile, our husband is grilled by a (wait for it) skeptical police detective (Spanish actor Eduardo Fajardo who played the evil villain in *Django*) who doesn't believe that the wife was kidnapped. Mainardi gets nervous.

The teenagers reach Seagull Rock by morning and immediately Luca (Alesio Orano from Bava's *House of Exorcism*) tries to make it with his lovely girlfriend Laura (Christina Galbo of *Breakfast at the Manchester Morgue* and *The House That Screamed* fame), a virgin who wants her first time to be special. Naturally, she refuses. Getting annoyed at Laura, Luca takes off in the car (shouldn't he be smelling something rather rank at this point?) and heads into town to find some food. On the way, he picks-up a very buxom blonde (Femi Benussi in a cheap wig) with car trouble and fucks her. While Luca is busy giving Femi the dirty business, the killer arrives at the beach house and proceeds to do the same to innocent

Laura, first roughing her up and then announcing that he "loves her" before brutally raping her. Cozzi sickeningly cuts quickly between the two couples, highlighting the savagery of Laura's deflowering. Finished, a flash of relief creases the killer's otherwise emotionless brow, and he ties her up and waits for Luca's return.

Back in town our husband is getting increasingly jumpy as the killer hasn't yet called. The detective becomes even more intrusive and annoying as he continually harps on the unlikely event that Nora was murdered rather than kidnapped.

Luca arrives back at the beach house, just in time to have the shit kicked out of him. Strolling out to his car with the body, the killer finds our blonde staring into the open trunk. Thinking quickly, he tells her that he's a cop and that the guy she'd just screwed was the murderer of the woman in the trunk. He leads the terrified bimbo back into the house where he proceeds to murder her in a grisly death scene. Blood sprays everywhere and the helpless woman spasms in her death throes, digging her fingernails deep into her palms. Physically and mentally wasted by the ferocity of his handiwork, the man in black wipes his brow and goes for a walk, leaving an unconscious Luca and a bound Laura alone. Laura frees herself using the knife our killer just discarded. Cutting her bonds, Laura brandishes the blade and — in a surprisingly quick climax — dispatches a surprised killer (two jabs and he is brought to his knees).

Next, we find Luca and Laura in the office of the nosy detective. They identify the killer as a mysterious hired assassin that even the cops know little of. But *The Killer Must Strike Again* doesn't end there! Our husband, getting nervous, returns from his late wife's father with the ransom cash only to find the killer's car parked outside. He notices that the trunk is ajar and peeks inside. There lies the battered, distorted dead body of his wife. Shocked, he gets into the car — cash and all — and takes off. He drives to the exact spot where the mysterious man dumped the Volkswagen and proceeds to do the same with his wife and car. Before he can complete the deed, the cops illuminate him with the glare of their headlights. Echoing the film's opening sequence, our husband is confronted by the detective who offers to light the man's cigarette with the lighter of the dead wife. Caught, Mr. Mainardi bows his head.

Dark, bleak, and (in its best moments) highly disturbing, *The Killer Must Strike Again* is a stunning piece of filmmaking, certainly on par with anything Sergio Martino or Umberto Lenzi did in the thriller genre. The fact that this was the director's second feature makes this achievement even more impressive. Unfortunately, little mention has been made of this seldom-seen gem and it would be a shame to see Cozzi's solitary claim to fame fall by the wayside. Sadly, nothing else in the man's filmography comes close to the power of this, his shining moment.

—Dave Todarello

Dave Todarello is the gifted editor of what is undoubtedly

ly one of the best irregularly published fanzines in the business, *NAKED! SCREAMING! TERROR!*

## A BLACK VEIL FOR LISA (1968) aka *La Morte Non Ha Sesso* Video Search of Miami

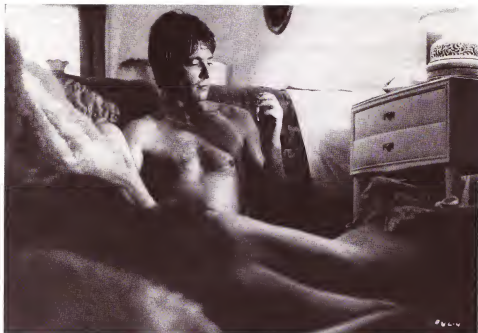
IF YOU CAN GET PAST THE IRRITATING DUBBING with its Cold War, Russian-sounding voices (evocative of Boris Badinov from a *Rocky* and *Bullwinkle* cartoon), you'll find Massimo Dallamano has crafted a flawed, yet mildly enjoyable crime drama. Known in the U.S. and Britain by the former of the above titles (the Italian literally translates *Death Does Not Have Sex!*) — *A Black Veil for Lisa* is a dual-parted affair with an ironic twist roughly separating the two, and worth enduring the aforementioned minor shortcomings for.

In the first half, we are introduced to aging police Inspector Bulov (John Mills) who is so obsessed with the idea that his younger wife (Luciana Paluzzi) is cheating on him that he begins following her movements during business hours. While trying to collar a drug kingpin, named Schouerman, Bulov nabs a hit man named Max (Robert Hoffman) who keeps shivving potential informants before the police can question them. Rather than turn the assassin over to the courts, the insanely jealous Bulov hires Max to murder his own wife! In part two, Max falls in love with his intended victim and, in another unexpected turn-of-events, it is Bulov himself who is killed — but not before arranging a little surprise for his murderer.

The screenplay makes provision for some great visual tricks, putting the quirks of peculiar characters to good use. One of these novel little touches includes the odd habit that Max has of continuously fooling with a coin that has a bullet depression in it (Max calls it his "lucky dollar"). The item actually figures into the plot rather than being a simple embellishment. Dallamano teases his audience in sequences like one where Bulov, embroiled in marital discord, interrogates a young female suspect in his office but hallucinates seeing his wife in her place (foreshadowing later revelations). Yet another, where a black-gloved killer drowns the screaming Mrs. Bulov in a bathtub, arises out of the Inspector's hyperactive imagination.

Supporting players are either crooks or cops. A clue that seemingly goes nowhere until the denouement involves a character called "The Rabbit" (sort of a rotund, squinty-eyed little fellow) who makes a verbal reference to tulips. The damn things proliferate throughout the film — on dining room tables, lurking in backgrounds, and so on (actually, there was a visual reference during the pre-credits sequence where yellow tulips were placed atop a coffin which is recycled at the end of the film). Likewise with a red Porsche, the car appears to be a red herring at first but later figures into the story in some minor way.

There is some splendid location photography con-



Luciana Paluzzi (lying prone in the foreground) and Robert Hoffman initiate a lawdy liaison in Massimo Dallamano's passable crime drama *A Black Veil for Lisa*.

tributed by Angelo Lotti that was executed in Hamburg, Germany (reportedly chosen for its association with the underworld elements). The restrained use of music in the film, particularly during the murders, was intentional in order to treat the slayings mostly in a stark manner. Musical director Igo Kantor is on record as having said he felt that the anticipation of murder and the suspense of it was accented best by the sound effects of the act itself. "Lisa's Theme"... well, I can take it or leave it. It was written by two New York songwriters and is dated as hell.

Handsome, Austrian-born Robert Hoffman (*Spasmo*, *Death Carries a Cane*) had a busy decade as an actor — he made at least a dozen films in Italy during the sixties. Strikingly beautiful Luciana Paluzzi (*Tragica Ceremonia en Villa Alexander*) is perfectly cast as Inspector Bulov's immoral wife (her performance is perhaps underscored by the teaser copy in Commonwealth United's ad mats for the film which read "White Veils for Angels... A Black Veil for Lisa"). Supposedly she was pursuing an education in marine engineering in Rome until a family friend got her a bit part in an Italian production called *Three Coins in the Fountain*. Sir John Mills, father of Hayley (childlike star of countless Disney live-action features)

and Juliet (known for insipid seventies TV fare), strikes the only sour note. No doubt uncomfortable with the nose dive his career had taken (from respectable war-hero pictures to programmers like this), one can almost see it translate into his handicapped performance on screen.

Massimo Dallamano started as a documentary cameraman in 1943 and toiled in the industry for 25 years before finally making his debut as a director with *Bandidos* (using the pseudonym of Max Dillmann). *A Black Veil for Lisa* immediately followed that same year. Dallamano continued jumping to other genres, directing psycho-killer films (*What Have You Done to Solange?* being the standout) and Edwige Fenech (pronounced "Edwish Penish") sex-comedies (*Innocence and Desire*) until his death in the seventies.

According to the U.S. pressbook, *A Black Veil for Lisa* was rated "X" when it was released here in 1969. This is puzzling because even with the occasional flashes of Ms. Paluzzi's nude body (usually accompanied by an unseen male presence undressing and caressing her) and the adulterous lovemaking scenes in soft-focus (which might have been considered controversial at the time but are positively tame by today's standards), the film is non-explicit in its depictions of sex and violence and liable to

be a disappointment for some viewers who prefer their VCR fodder to have a harder edge.

—Bob Sargeant

Many thanks to Mike Meintzschel for translating helpful passages from Italian film directories.

**THE ALCOVE (1985)**  
**aka *L'Alcova***  
**Video Search of Miami**

EVER WALK AROUND IN A SWAMP? REMEMBER THE stink, and the uncomfortable feeling of crawly things worming around in your shoes? If you like that sensation, *The Alcove* is the movie for you. You'd think I'd jump at the chance to see another Joe D'Amato film, right? Unfortunately, *The Alcove* isn't the high point of Signor D'Amato's career. I have witnessed some cheap excuses to lapse into sex scenes before, but *The Alcove* has achieved the pinnacle in this category, as you'll see presently.

*The Alcove* is set somewhere in Italy in the early half of this century. Elio (Al Cliver) returns home from the "war in Abyssinia." While he has been away, his younger second wife Alessandra (Lilli Carati), a painter, has been keeping the home fires burning with Velma (Annie Belle), an impressionable young thing who was hired to be a secretary. Alessandra has expanded her duties to include being her own lesbian paramour. Elio has a surprise. Apparently while he was busy slaughtering Third World types, he saved a native tribe from extinction. In gratitude, the chief of the tribe gave Elio his daughter, the princess Zerbal, as his slave and love-puppy. Elio brings Zerbal (Laura Gemser), now thoroughly debauched by his worldly education, home to Italy with him "to help around the house." While Elio is away on business, Zerbal expresses her righteous indignation at all the carpet-munching going on by heaving rocks through the window and sitting in a tree. When Elio returns, he transfers his title to Zerbal to Alessandra. In a touching scene, Zerbal laps Alessandra's breasts to show she is now "hers." Man, that never worked for me. . . Elio assures Alessandra that it's all part of the ceremony. Gradually, Alessandra tires of Velma and takes up with the exotic, and frequently buck-naked, Zerbal. Zerbal, in turn, comes to dominate Alessandra through a combination of sexual favors and "that hoodoo that she do so well."

Velma doesn't handle rejection well. Fortunately for Velma, Elio's handsome son Fulvio pays a visit. Fulvio is the product of an earlier union and not in Alessandra's good graces. Fulvio becomes totally smitten with V., and eventually "dines at the V" to console her. Velma displays remarkable switch-hitting adaptability and appreciates Fulvio's eager efforts. Elio is not having such a good time of it. Shut out of his own bedchamber by his wife and the lusty Zerbal, ignored by his now bi-sexual secretary, all he can do is mope and drink while trying to make a fast buck writing a book about the war. The book must

not have been a bestseller because Elio is having troubles with his creditors. Elio hits upon a novel idea for making fast cash: to "bring home the bacon," why not make a film starring his own wife "makin' bacon" with Zerbal, Velma, and Pepe the Gardener? If you think this is stretching credibility a bit, you'll find the whole crew's easy acceptance of the idea a bit mind-boggling. It doesn't take a Nostradamus to predict that things might get a little out of hand, and they do. Velma gets savagely used by Alessandra & Co., and loses her largely technical virginity to Pepe the Gardener. She escapes to visit Fulvio and plot revenge, which she gets in the very next scene by roasting Zerbal alive, and then *finis*, as we bump into another abrupt, senseless ending.

It's a sad commentary on this film that the most dynamic character in it was Pepe the Gardener, who went uncredited. Maybe it's just as well, since I'm positive that he isn't too eager to own up to being in this film. *The Alcove* is a gloomy, cheesy film that leaves the viewer feeling so . . . so . . . CHEAP! I felt like wearing a trenchcoat and sitting close to the exit while I was watching it. Usually D'Amato's efforts appeal at some level, even if that level is amusement at the absurdity of it all. *The Alcove* doesn't even have that — it's too tired, dark and grotesque. Most of the D'Amato films that I have seen have been a paean to Laura Gemser. *The Alcove* attempts to achieve that and fails. I am not a partisan of either the pro- or anti- Gemser camps (as chronicled in another publication), but I do think she has had her visual moments such as in *Black Emanuelle*. Not so in *The Alcove*! Gemser looks like fifty miles of bad road and puts in an acting job that is not only bad, it's HORRENDOUSLY bad. True, it's hard to elucate such deathless stuff as "You are *miyun*. You are my hoor. You are my *beetch* in heat," and "Come on beast. Here is your prize." Still, she might have done something with it, like twitch one facial muscle. Gemser's fellow cast members were no big help either. Cliver came off as a blowhard, and Belle and Carati's idea of acting was to gasp and roll their eyes during the cunnilingus scenes. Speaking of which, hasn't D'Amato ever heard of any other sexual act? One gets the impression that this is par for the course as every member of the cast except for Pepe the Gardener happily "heads south." Poor Pepe! Fulvio and Velma plight their troth after one such session. You can't say that those Italians aren't sensitive to a woman's special needs!

Technically, *The Alcove* was worse than substandard. It suffers from typical European under-lighting and shoddy production values on top of the horrid acting jobs. A horny Boy Scout could have come up with a better script. All the appearances of a rushed production were in evidence. There were a couple of really twisted anti-Catholic messages that were kind of interesting from my subjective viewpoint, but treated in such a slapdash fashion as to become a bad joke. If you are a Gemser or D'Amato completist (and what a dedicated crowd that is!), then there might be a reason to view it if you can find it. And if you like seeing Laura Gemser buck-nekkid a

great deal of the time, you may want to check it out. Otherwise, shun this film with vigor. You'll respect yourself in the morning. Go out and rent *Love Camp* or an *Emanuelle* movie if you want a cheap thrill.

—Walt O'Hara

Walt O'Hara is a frequent contributor to *VIDEOOZE* and somehow found time in his busy schedule to provide the feature article for this issue as well.

**UN GATTO NEL CERVELLO (1990)**  
**aka Cat in the Brain**  
**(No U.S. video release)**

A MAN CHAINSAWS THE HEAD AND LIMBS OFF A naked woman's corpse in unflinching detail. . . A decomposing head appears inexplicably inside a microwave oven. . . A girl in a shower cubicle receives multiple stab-wounds that would make Hitchcock blanch. . . A small boy astride a tricycle is decapitated with an axe. . .

Simultaneously disappointing and hilarious, Lucio Fulci's grisliest film for 8 years is packed with such gratuitous carnage, but sadly suffers from an almost complete absence of "cervello." Anyone who found his *The Gates of Hell*, *The Beyond* and *The House by the Cemetery* poetically beautiful and disturbing will consider this silly, schambolic effort a severe let-down, bearing none of the haunting flourishes of the early '80s work. On the other hand, only a fool would attempt to deny the appeal of the excessive scenes of violence in his best work, and the audacity of *Un Gatto*. . . 's torrent of gore makes for often hysterical viewing. Even this enjoyment is spoiled, though, by the revelation that much of the violent material has simply been spliced-in from other movies, several directed by hacks other than Fulci!

If violence alone isn't enough to maintain your interest, turning to the "plot" for sustenance is unlikely to help. What is presented is little more than a hasty sketch about a horror film director (called Lucio Fulci!) who feels impelled to consult a psychiatrist about his propensity for alarmingly visceral "visions" which intrude on his life away from the movie set. The shrink grabs the chance to hypnotize Fulci into feeling guilty of heinous crimes that the psychiatrist himself has been committing. Be prepared for a disappointment,

however, if the idea of Fulci waxing autobiographical piques your curiosity, because there is little in the way of analysis to the film's credit. Few directors, having chosen to play themselves in a movie, would leave their "character" so obstinately undeveloped. Even a gratuitous display of narcissism would have been preferable to Fulci's disconsolate meandering. But he seems satisfied just to mooch through his role with barely a desultory flicker of animation.

Although punctuated by grisly visions of death, putrefaction and dismemberment, the mood of this film is irritatingly facetious. In this context, the hyperbolic violence remains curiously unimpressive, and is often hampered further by being relegated to merely repetitive hallucination on Fulci's part: *Videodrome* it isn't. The insane psychiatrist character is an absurd amalgam of "crazy" grins and goggle-eyed mirth, and it's a shame to see what could have been an interesting idea squandered by such risible acting. Considering Fulci's defiantly down-beat approach throughout the last 20 years, such misplaced levity is so unwelcome that it resembles bad faith. Certainly, scenes where Fulci re-utilizes music familiar from *The Beyond*, or makes odd visual allusions to that film, serve as no more than a reminder of Fulci's gradual slide into a poverty of imagination. It's also a testimony to the appalling drudgery of his output over the last few years that this ragbag of badly mounted, schlocky gore is his most enjoyable film for an age! But those of us who felt there was more to Fulci than met (or pierced) the eye will all be depressed by *Un Gatto*. . . 's prosaic photography, graceless editing and complete lack of affect.

One wonders where the Italian horror movie can go in the 1990's. All the familiar names have disgraced themselves to some degree, with Fulci and Deodato's recent

output particularly dismaying in its fatuous lack of punch. Even D'Amato and Lenzi have performed the near-impossible feat of changing for the worse, their efforts now so bland I'm disinclined to review them. Only Argento remains worthy of attention, forcing one to acknowledge that perhaps he is the only real artist practicing in the Italian horror arena after all. Dear old Mario is long dead — one wishes fervently that he could have made a Faustian pact to reincarnate in Lamberto's body, sending the soul responsible for *Graveyard Disturbance* to the pit! Many readers will know (thanks to Mark Ashworth



An illustration from an Italian mini-pressbook for *Un Gatto nel Cervello*.

in *EYEBALL* and later in Tim Lucas' *VIDEO WATCHDOG*) of Pupi Avati's excellent horror films — all TWO of them! Word has it that "Pussy" Avati is "afraid" to return to the horror genre, so much for him. Out of sight of the English-speaking world, directors like Agostin [*Tras el Cristal*] Villarronga and Andrzej [*Possession*] Zulawski continue to operate. Not that you'd know it, their work being too "intellectual" for the video shelves and too bizarre for the U.S./U.K. art circuits. Euro-horror lovers have been forced to either seal themselves in a



Scenes of beautiful women being victimized are de rigueur in Dario Argento's films like this one from *Inferno*.

"Golden Age" time capsule (room for one more inside!) or scout further afield, the Far East being the current favorite. Hong Kong films are yielding the obtuse and extravagant surprises we once expected from Italian productions. Apart from the possibly rising star of Michele Soavi, things are looking bleak. Who would have thought, back in 1981, that the guy in the seat next to the girl who vomits-up her entrails in *The Gates of Hell* would eclipse the director of that wonderful film? On the evidence of *Un Gatto nel Cervello*, Lucio Fulci would be lucky to land a non-speaking part in Soavi's next movie!

—Stephen Thrower

Stephen Thrower edits the slick British film journal of *European Sex and Horror, EYEBALL*. Will we ever see another issue!

## INFERNO (1980) Key Video

IN A NEW YORK APARTMENT BLOCK, ROSE (IRENE MIRACLE) uncovers a dark mystery concerning the neo-gothic building she lives in. A former house of the Mother of Darkness (one of a coven of three witches), the structure is riddled with hidden passages and secret rooms. Drawing on clues taken from a book written by the architect, Rose explores the dank cellar and discovers a flooded sub-basement into which she dives to recover a dropped keyring. Swimming through an elegantly furnished room, Rose is seemingly attacked by a rotting corpse. Later, she is brutally murdered.

After receiving a letter, Rose's brother Mark (Leigh McCloskey) travels from Rome to find out what's happened to her, and is none too pleased to learn Rose is missing. Determined to discover the truth, Mark sets about investigating his sister's disappearance but encounters only a series of incredible coincidences, insoluble rid-

dles, stunningly choreographed violence, and visual quotes from Argento's other pictures.

Said to be influenced by Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), little is as it first appears in this hallucinatory trip through Dario Argento's deranged imagination. Confusingly plotted, blandly scripted ("Can I ask you a strange question?"), absurdly dramatic — but still always breathtaking to watch, *Inferno* is supremely stylish, ominously calm, shattered at irregular intervals by electrifying scenes of death. Cat attacks, rat

attacks, and damn-near heart attacks are brought on by sinister unseen forces that strike without warning. Newly introduced characters are unexpectedly seen off, by off-screen assailants. Cryptic cautions are issued throughout, but sadly go unheeded.

If Hitchcock was "The Master," then surely Argento is "Il Maestro" of movie murder? His films are a glorious celebration of over-killing and sudden inexplicable demises. More than just a hi-technically skilled filmmaker, Argento is a genuine artiste of modern cinema. Skillfully avoiding the often blatant misogyny of his cultural contemporaries (compare his later *Tenebrae* with Fulci's *The New York Ripper* for example), Argento's films developed from early Hitchcockian thrillers into dazzlingly shot and edited collections of splatter art. Here, rhythm and effect take obvious precedence over plot and structure, but even the mundane dialogue scenes are eerie and compelling. The endless parade of beautiful women in Argento's films are it seems, merely aesthetic icons present only to be tortured or mutilated (often, it's rumored, by the gloved hands of the director himself), on screen — in his on-going tribute to Mario Bava's treatment of Barbara Steele? (Bava worked uncredited on *Inferno*'s special effects).

*Inferno* boasts a piano-heavy score by rock musician Keith Emerson, which does at least offer an acceptable alternative (or should that read, a welcome respite?), to the usual near-deafening, hysterical sonic attacks of Goblin material — but is unfortunately, only occasionally effective. This musical accompaniment is all that saves the ending, Mark's fiery confrontation with Death itself is admittedly disappointing and conventional, in the wake of earlier bravura sequences. But in my view, *Inferno* is (all faults aside), Argento's most luridly colorful, fabulously inventive, finest work to date.

—Tony Lee

Tony Lee is the editor of the perceptive and always interesting British fanzine, *STRANGE ADVENTURES*.



ILLUSTRATION BY BLAIR CULLINGER

## THE CHANGING FACE OF THE WIP FILM

by Walter O'Hara

PERHAPS THE GUILTIEST OF GUILTY PLEASURES FOR the cinema sleaze aficionado is that subgenre of exploitation movies known as the Women In Prison (or WIP) film. Dealing as they do with the taboo (homosexuality) and the psychological (domination of the female), the WIP film provides material for the darkest Freudian fantasies. Also yards of masturbation fare for generations of boys the world over, but that's expected, isn't it? This article does not attempt to present an academic portrait of the genre by any means, nor do we have the space to do the subject complete justice. Therefore, let us provide a brief review of the genre, its humble beginnings, and the mutation of the innocent into the hard-hitting films we all know and love today. We will attempt to provide a select

videography (as best we can) at the end of this piece. Let the reader assume that the material here is presented in a lighthearted fashion by an old fan.

### WHAT IS WIP?

How do you define a genre, even a narrow one like this? The more you look at something, the fuzzier it gets around the edges. Where does one genre start and the other end? Is *Blue Velvet* a S&M psycho-drama or a slapstick comedy? Depends on your perception, doesn't it? Fortunately, you won't find such fuzziness in Women In Prison films. The WIP genre is unique in that it has clearly defined itself over time. Unlike the other shorter-lived exploitation genres such as biker films, LSD films,

SO YOUNG... SO BAD...  
*So What?*

# REFORM SCHOOL GIRLS



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and blaxploitation, there are certain absolutes that an audience demands out of a WIP film and the WIP genre has always delivered. The WIP film, however, changes with the world around it, providing a film genre that is consistent, yet a mirror of the society that spawned it.

As the name implies, the WIP film is always about women in a situation where their freedom is impaired and they are helpless to a cruel system. The WIP movies are always strong morality plays where the "system," represented by the prison, is on trial. The system is not always a prison, but can be any form of systematic form of repressive authority. Reform schools, chain gangs, Nazi concentration camps, juvenile detention halls, and sundry forms of slavery have all been variations on the traditional prison theme.

Because WIP is a genre that caters to the expectations of a predominantly male audience, the overt sexual element of these movies is very strong indeed. Nudity, which was introduced into the genre in the mid-sixties, has become a mainstay of the Women In Prison melodramas. The modern WIP devotee would be extremely disappointed in a WIP movie that did not have at least one shower scene. In 1986's *Reform School Girls*, starring Wendy O. Williams and Sybil Danning, the producers of the film parodied this expectation in their advertising—"They're tough, and they take a LOT of showers..."

More cerebral critics than I would be inclined to dismiss WIP melodramas as softcore porn through the looking glass. To reduce the WIP film to the simply sexual is to do the genre a disservice and ignore the psychological. The Women In Prison film is about anything BUT sex. A WIP film is about power—the power of the emerging role of women as equals in a male dominated world, and the threat that trend represented to men in the 1950s and 1960s, and to some extent today.

At left: The one-sheet for New World Pictures' 1986 release of *Reform School Girls*.



Dyanne Thorne became an icon of the WIP genre in Don Edmonds' disturbingly humorless *Ilsa She Wolf of the SS*.

Women In Prison movies play on the subjugation of women, the symbolic theft of their power. Perhaps the changing role of woman represented a threat to men. Man is an irrational animal that clings to that which is comfortable and familiar. On a subconscious level, stronger woman's roles represented a system gone haywire to the audience of the 1960s and 1970s. In an attempt to impose order, the image of subjugating womanhood must have been very gratifying at some level, and certainly very marketable. For as long as men and women compete in the workplace, the WIP genre will continue to be popular with males.

## A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF WIP

The first Women In Prison film as we know it was *Caged* (1950). Many of the stereotypes of the genre were established by this movie. The WIP films of the 1950s and early 1960s represent the first stage of the genre. The black and white WIP films of the

1950s were heavy handed, yet suggestive. The proscription against depicting certain taboo subjects was still enforced, so directors only hinted where they would be more blatant a decade later. Since the films were directed at the grindhouse and drive-in circuit, some form of titillation had to be provided.

The women of the Women In Prison movies of the first stage are almost all victims of deplorable circumstance, frequently as a result of a man's evil deeds. Apparently America in the 1950s could not envision a woman being capable of violent crime on her own! An excellent sample of the first stage can be found in Edgar Ulmer's *Girls in Chains*. This little known film (a recent RHINO video release) features the kernel of classic WIP stereotypes—The Protagonist, the Bad Con, and the Warden. The Warden, atypically, is the sympathetic character in this movie (although she does strut around in a form fitting uniform and Betty Page haircut). In the end, the bad men are vanquished and there's a bright tomorrow for the Warden's girls (as we fade out on their smiling faces). A



Among the best from the fourth phase of Women in Prison movies is *Terminal Island*.

neatly packaged morality play.

By the close of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, many of the genre's best movies were being produced in Europe, especially in Italy. Spearheaded by directors like Jesse Franco, much of the genre was defined by such films as *99 Women* and *Barbed Wire Dolls*. The second phase of WIP introduced the nudity (in soft-core focus) and overt sexual themes of the genre that would become formula in later releases. With the changing mores of society came a new approach towards exploitation cinema. The settings of WIP stories began to change, leaning towards the unfamiliar and non-traditional. Women were no longer kept in prisons so much as work camps, white slavery, and chain gangs. The Warden, who had been a representative of society in the first phase, became a figure of corruption and vice. The common subplot of many of the Italian features is that the Warden is usually exploiting the prison populace for some form of cheap labor or as unwilling prostitutes. The Italian films usually would revolve around exposing the warden's schemes to the world.

Another trend that did not reach fruition until the third phase was the Nazi concentration camp subgenre

filmed mostly in Europe either in Spain or Italy. In this variant of the WIP film, the women inmates are kept in concentration camps as victims of horrible experiments carried out by a Mad Doctor or the Warden. The level of sadism depicted in films like *SS Campo Experiments* by Bruno Mattei, *Gestapo's Last Orgy* by Caesar Canaveri, or *Deported Women of the SS Special Section* by Rene Di Silvestro set new lows. But the most infamous of these is the widely copied (and even parodied) *Ilsa She Wolf of the SS* by Don Edmonds. *Ilsa* is a bleak statement at best. The title role (played by the visually stunning Dianne Thorne) is a combination of a Warden and Mad Doctor character, who performs horrid experiments on the luckless inmates with the standard violent revenge ending. *Ilsa* spawned three sequels (*Ilsa Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks*, *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* and *Ilsa the Tigress of Siberia*) and was a great commercial success. The subgenre of concentration-camp style movies lasted approximately between 1968 and 1978 and is probably the most identifiable type of exploitation movie stereotype.

The WIP movies from the mid 1970s to the present have leaned more heavily towards the sexual and less towards the violent. The standouts from this fourth

phase are the excellent *Caged Heat*, *Hellhole*, and *Terminal Island*. Many of the films of this period had moved from Europe and America to the Philippines, rapidly becoming the exploitation Mecca of the world. The genre had become so established by this period that it could even parody itself, as in 1988's *Reform School Girls* starring Wendy O. Williams as the Bad Con and Sybil Danning (dressed as Dyanne Thorne in *Ilsa*). *Reform School Girls* has every WIP genre cliché in the book, with Bad Cons, Protagonists, Evil Wardens, lesbian guards and the greatest violent denouement on film. Women In Prison films continue to be popular today, as evidenced by the new WIP films that are released to video each year.

## THE GANG'S ALL HERE: WHAT MAKES WIP WIP

WIP films feature extremely defined, time-honored plot devices. These archetypal elements are featured in almost every WIP film I have ever seen, and deserve some definition. Some of them are so familiar that they have become stereotypes. Nothing defines WIP films better than the parts that make up the whole.

**The Mad Doctor.** This character is a product of the Concentration Camp period of WIP films. The Mad Doctor can also be the Warden. The Mad Doctor is interested in carrying out horrible, degrading and painful experiments on the inmates in pursuit of "scientific enquiry."

**The Sadistic Warden.** The Sadistic Warden is the mainstay of each WIP movie and is the usual antagonist. The Warden represents society at its most corrupt and venal. The Warden can be either a man or a woman, frequently a lesbian who takes advantage of the Innocent Newcomer. The Warden usually is part of some evil grand design.

**The Innocent Newcomer.** The Innocent Newcomer is the girl that has been jailed by a cruel fate. The Innocent Newcomer is invariably a naive, innocent type who is a born victim.

**The Hardened Con.** The Hardened Con serves the purpose of pure plot development. The Hardened Con always gives away the Warden's dastardly scheme, and frequently ends up being the sidekick of the Protagonist.

**The Protagonist.** The Protagonist is the main character of the story. Usually the Protagonist is a female, typically incarcerated on some trumped-up charge. The Protagonist is the strongest character in any WIP film and also the most unbelievable. The Protagonist is a paragon of virtues, being strong, moral and virtuous to the point of being a cliché. Still, a WIP film could hardly be representative of the genre without this character.

**The Bulldoze Guard.** This is a recurring character in

many of the modern films. She usually has designs on either the Protagonist or the Innocent Newcomer.

**The Bad Con.** The Bad Con is a universal character to any prison movie (as well as a WIP film). The Bad Con provides another source of conflict in the plot. The Bad Con in WIP films is usually a lesbian, sometimes a member of a race other than the Protagonist's, and occasionally in league with some grand design of the Warden. In some WIP films, the Bad Con has a change of heart in the last minutes of the last reel, and joins in the Violent Denouement on the side of the Protagonist.

**The Violent Denouement.** Nearly every Women In Prison film has a version of this in the last part of the last reel. The Violent Denouement is the part in the film where justice is served up to the Warden and his/her cronies, the evil scheme fails, and usually the Protagonist is vindicated. The Violent Denouement is routinely a riot or an uprising of some sort.

**The Shower Scene.** This is the classic element that just about any fan or non-fan of the genre can identify. If you ask a man on the street what he identifies with Women In Prison movies, this is usually the first element he mentions. The shower scene emerged from the American and Italian WIP films of the late 60s and early 70s.

**Violent Torture.** As the WIP genre changed from the soft-core 60s to the sadistic 70s, the disciplinary acts carried out on the hapless inmates became more and more sadistic, bizarre and dehumanizing.

## SELECT VIDEOGRAPHY

The following is a list of films covered in the text and their availability on videotape. Most of these are discontinued but many can be rented via mail through The Video Vault (1.800.828.5866).

*Barbed Wire Dolls* (Mondo Video)  
*Blue Velvet* (Karl-Lorimar Video)  
*Caged* (no U.S. video release)  
*Caged Heat* (Embassy)  
*Deported Women of the SS Special Section* (Video Search of Miami)  
*Gestapo's Last Orgy* (aka *Caligula Reincarnated as Hitler*) (Magnum)  
*Girls in Chains* (Channel 13 Video/Rhino)  
*Hellhole* (RCA)  
*Ilsa She Wolf of the SS* (Videotrics)  
*Ilsa Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks* (Videotrics)  
*Ilsa the Tigress of Siberia* (American Video)  
*Ilsa the Wicked Warden* (aka *Greta, the Mad Butcher*) (aka *Ilsa Absolute Power*) (Cinepix)  
*99 Women* (Republic)  
*Reform School Girls* (New World Video)  
*SS Campo Experimente* (aka *Women's Camp 119*) (unavailable at prestime)  
*Terminal Island* (VCE)



## Erika Blanc

Actress

ENRICA MARIA COLOMBATTO (BETTER KNOWN AS Erika Blanc), now doing stage plays in Italy, made most of her screen appearances during the late '60s and early '70s. A familiar face in European horror cinema, you may remember her as the succubus who was constantly in danger of falling out of her blouse in *Devil's Nightmare* (1971). It's an entertainingly bad Belgian/Italian co-production where Ms. Blanc managed the amazing feat of looking both alluring and horrific at the same time.

In Mario Bava's *Kill Baby Kill* (1966) she played Monica, a coroner's assistant, alongside Giacomo Rossi-Stuart (another frequently-seen face in Italian films). Together they sought to unravel the mystery surrounding an eerie old-world village and some corpses with silver coins embedded in their hearts.

Another of Erika Blanc's more interesting horror pic-

tures was *The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave* (1971) where she was a scheming stripper with a macabre nightclub act involving a coffin. In Adrian Hoven's *Mark of the Devil II* (1972), she portrayed the widow of a murdered aristocrat (Hoven himself) and was tortured at length by witchfinders who wanted to get at her late husband's riches. A few years later, she appeared opposite Paul Naschy in the tired *A Dragonfly for Each Corpse* (1973) where she was the girlfriend of a police detective with a reputation for violence.

With eyes that can only be described as hypnotic and the most unusual (but not unbecoming) nose I've ever seen, she is easy to spot. Erika Blanc's presence could more than compensate a viewer for whatever a picture lacked in other areas and her name certainly deserves a place among the leading ladies of European horror. ■

# fanzines



WELCOME TO THE THIRD INSTALLMENT OF THE fanzines column. The recession in the U.S. has taken its toll as there are now fewer genre publications on the market when not too long ago it seemed like everyone was doing this. Many of those still around are quite good so let's try to help keep them going.

## MONSTER

**Tim Paxton**

M.P.O. Box 67, Oberlin, OH 44074-0067

IN THE EDITOR'S OWN WORDS, "WE ONLY REVIEW *Monster* films, none of that slasher stuff!" And that's exactly what *MONSTER* does! Double-issue number 51/52 was transitional for Tim as this was when he introduced his absolutely brilliant "Hamburger Monsters" concept (get him to explain it). Since then, he has published numerous "Hamburger" wish-lists from other zine editors (myself included) and this practice has even spawned imitations elsewhere. Why miss out on the fun when you can get 24 issues for a mere \$11?

## HORROR PICTURES COLLECTION

**Gerard Noel**

90 Rue Gandhi, 46000 Cahors, France

GERARD CONSISTENTLY PUTS OUT ONE OF THE sharpest-looking publications on the market. The text is almost entirely in French but the many large, well-reproduced and rare (sometimes in color) stills make every issue a sight for sore eyes — even if you don't understand the language. Past editions have focused on the likes of Mario Bava and Dario Argento. *I actually have a limited supply of the latest (Christopher Lee, Part 1) in stock now for \$5 each!* Make checks payable to VIDEOOZE and mail to P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304 (of course, you could always write to Gerard).

## EXPLOITATION RETROSPECT

**Dan Taylor**

P.O. Box 1155, Haddonfield, NJ 08033-0708

THIS IS ONE ZINE THAT I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD to getting because you never know what to expect!

Rather than limit himself to just film coverage, Dan expounds on everything from the death of rock and roll legend Johnny Thunders to alleged tampering with the formula for Mountain Dew(!). All this delivered in the editor's extremely readable style. The best issue by far was that ungodly Klaus Kinski special which Dan recently had to consider reprinting. *ER* comes out 4 times a year for \$1 U.S. and Canada/\$2 elsewhere.

## STRANGE ADVENTURES

**Tony Lee**

13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle of Wight,  
PO30 3AJ, England

EACH NEW ISSUE SEEMS TO COME OUT LIKE clockwork (which is admirable) making this one of the more dependable British fanzines around. It's typically jam-packed with horror/fantasy news, reviews, stills and art. With a tendency to cover newer video and big screen releases, *STRANGE ADVENTURES* does it so much better than the glossy pro-zines that typically read like press releases. Personally, I like to read about their film festivals (like "Black Sunday" which has run some great Asian and European features). Check it out! Subscriptions are \$35 for 12 monthly issues which works out to less than \$3 a pop (checks should be made payable to "Tony Lee").

## MARTIAL ARTS MOVIE ASSOCIATES

**Ric Meyers**

1655 Post Road E. #71, Westport, CT 06880

I'M A SUCKER FOR MARTIAL ARTS MOVIES (ESPECIALLY those from Japan) and was thrilled to death when I first discovered Ric's book on the subject. Well, M.A.M.A. exists to fill in the gaps until an updated edition comes out and it certainly does the trick. Always informative, it's one of those zines that you even learn from by reading the letters pages. One of my favorite issues (#18) had career bios on old Shaw Brothers stars (what? No Kuo Chui!). Subscriptions are \$10 for four quarterly issues. Make checks or money orders out to Bill Connolly and mail them to him at 6635 DeLongpre #4, Hollywood, CA 90028. Letters to the editor go to Ric at the above address.



## Horrible Import Horror?

SINCE WE last published, I have received several complaints about the video mail order company known as **IMPORT HORROR VIDEO**. There is one case in particular which I have been paying close

attention to because, after seven months, the matter has yet to be resolved to the satisfaction of the customer. This individual, who has been patient in the extreme, presented me with copies of both sides of his cancelled check and reported that he never received his order. I wrote a letter on his behalf to IHV but the response received three months later did not directly address the problem.

Sole proprietor Allen Hale's reply explained how he had suffered through a multitude of personal tragedies. If Mr. Hale found the time to cash the checks through his misfortune, couldn't he have found the time to process orders as well — or at least issue delay notifications?

These are not uncommon allegations and gra-

### At a Glance

Import Horror Video  
5517 War Admiral Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

**Pros:** Free catalogs with an excellent selection including many hard-to-find foreign titles. Quantity discounts available.

**Cons:** Extremely slow to deliver. Infrequently responsive to inquiries and poor problem resolution (see below).

tuitous assumptions folks. In the past I've purchased tapes from IHV myself and am hard-pressed to think of a time when I haven't had to write to inquire about the status of my order after a few months have gone by. I've always received my tapes from IHV eventually but who needs the hassle when there are much faster services around? Sadly, a lot of these little NTSC conversion houses seem to operate like this. Recently Hale has stated that he has hired a full time employee to run his video business 5 days a week but if it were my money on the line, I would hedge my bets with another supplier until Mr. Hale's track record shows some improvement. ■

#### The Video 5-Star Rating System

- \*\*\*\*\* Top-notch, best quality, price and service available
- \*\*\*\* Exceptional, highly recommended
- \*\*\* Competent, worth looking into
- \*\* Passable, better than nothing
- \* Inferior, save your money

## Son of Pseudonyms

IN A CONTINUING effort to try and help sort out the confusing mess created by the use of stage names, here's the second addendum to that A-Z list which began last issue.

**DARIO ARGENTO**  
Sirio Bernardotte  
Roberto Pariente

**SARAH BAY**  
Rosalba Neri

**AL CLIVER**  
Pierluigi Conti

**MASSIMO DALLAMANO**  
Max Dallamano  
Max Dallman  
Jack Dalmas  
Max Dalmos  
Jack Dalmos  
Max Dillmann

**ALEXANDRA DELLI COLLI**  
Alexandra Cole

**GEORGE EASTMAN**  
Luigi Montefiore

**RICCARDO FREDA**  
Robert Hampton  
George Lincoln  
Willy Pareto  
Rik Sjostrom

**LUCIO FULCI**  
Louis Fuller  
Richard Gale

**LAURA GEMSER**  
Moira Chen

**TONY KENDALL**  
Luciano Stella

**ROBERTO MAURI**  
Robert Jones  
Robert Morris

**GIACOMO ROSSI-STUART**  
Jack Stuart  
Ross Stuart

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## Acknowledgments

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY of the **VIDEOOZE** Archives except: Page 11-12 (Harry Dolezal), Page 19 (Max Della Mora) and Page 20 (Craig Ledbetter). ■

## Next Issue

Will the real Dr. Hitchcock please stand up?

Helga Liné mini-profile

More video reviews and a whole truckload more.



We've long heard that the U.S. version of Riccardo Frede's *L'Orrible Segreto del Dr. Michcock* runs a good bit shorter than British prints. What's different? Read our video comparison piece next time and find out!

